DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 790 CS 012 287

AUTHOR Commeyras, Michelle; And Others
TITLE Elementary and Middle School Partnerships: The Centrality of Relationships in Literacy Learning. Instructional Resource No. 10.
INSTITUTION National Reading Research Center, Athens, GA.; National Reading Research Center, College Park, MD.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 95
CONTRACT 117A20007
NOTE 35p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Autobiographies; *Cross Age Teaching; *Discussion (Teaching Technique); Elementary Education; Grade 2; Grade 8; *Literacy; Middle Schools; Partnerships in Education; Program Descriptions
IDENTIFIERS Literacy Events

ABSTRACT

This pamphlet describes a year-long project that began with the idea of inviting eighth graders to study the thoughts of second graders as shared during literature discussions. It then evolved into a more elaborate project bolstered by the students' enthusiasm and interest in each other. The pamphlet describes the students, establishment of the student partnerships, the writing and exchange of autobiographies, three videotaped literature discussions in the second-grade classroom, and the culminating literacy event for the partners--getting together to read the books the eighth graders had written for the second graders. The pamphlet also discusses suggestions for improving future literacy partnerships. The pamphlet concludes that: (1) the exchange of autobiographies supported students' self-expression; (2) the exchange of letters about storybook discussions supported students' processes of discovering and generating meaning and sharing that meaning with others; (3) the eighth graders gained a sense of competence as literate persons by authoring the books for the second graders; and (4) the contribution of ideas by students that further developed the literacy partnerships promoted their sense of self-determination. Contains 11 references. (RS)

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Elementary and Middle School Partnerships:

The Centrality of Relationships in Literacy Learning

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Elementary and Middle School Partnerships: The Centrality of Relationships in Literacy Learning

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INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE NO. 10
Fall 1995

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Michelle Commeyras is an Assistant Professor of Reading Education at the University of Georgia. She received her Ph.D. in education from the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana in 1991. Her longtime interest has been exploring ways or promoting critical thinking through text-based discussion. Her emerging interests are critical literacy and the potential of feminist theories in exploring gender and reading.

Johni Mathis has been a classroom teacher for fifteen years. She received her Master's degree in 1982 and has taught grades 5–8. She teaches at Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School. Her special interests are literacy partnerships across grades and teaching English and literature through team-level units. Johni also enjoys teaching the Middle School course for RESA.

Georgiana Sumner has been a classroom teacher for sixteen years. She has taught grades K–3, and presently teaches second grade at Alps Road Elementary. She received a M.Ed. from the University of Georgia. Georgiana has always been interested in creating an environment for risk-free student-centered participation and creative thinking. Motivating and supporting children at all ability levels has been especially challenging. Focusing on student literacy partnerships across grade levels has been of special interest in meeting this challenge.

National Reading Research Center
Universities of Georgia and Maryland
Instructional Resource No. 10
Fall 1995

Elementary and Middle School Partnerships: The Centrality of Relationships in Literacy Learning

I think this entire project was really fun. I enjoyed reading the books, The Black Snowman, Me and Neesie, *and* Jumanji. *I thought all the books we chose to read were great. They were filled with things that have to do with imagination. Also, I enjoyed sharing my thoughts with the second graders and them sharing their thoughts with me. Last but not least, the trips that we took were fun. This project should keep going for years to come.*

Lacy

When I first started on this project I thought it was stupid. Then I understood the purpose and it really got interesting. I enjoyed all the books we read and so did Sherrie. She had a lot of questions in the book Me and Neesie. *I think she had a lot of questions because it made her think. Sherrie was very quiet around me the first visit and tried to avoid me. Then during the last visit, I started talking to her like I was her best friend. Then she opened up and started talking to me. This project really taught me how to work with someone a lot younger than me.*

Jerome

Lacy and Jerome, students in an eighth-grade Reading/Language Arts class, became interested and absorbed in a joint project between their class and students in a second-grade class. Georgiana Sumner, a second-grade teacher, convinced her sister Johni Mathis, an eighth-grade teacher, that they should join the School Research Consortium, a teacher-researcher community established by the National Reading Research Center (Allen, Shockley, & Baumann, in press). They decided to collaborate with Michelle Commeyras, a university professor, in designing a research project for students in both classes.

The project began with the idea of inviting eighth graders to study the thoughts of second graders as shared during literature discussions based on student-generated questions (Commeyras & Sumner, 1994). Johni explained to her students that we had been using transcripts to learn more about how children think and were interested in knowing how eighth-grade students would analyze and interpret the thinking of second graders. Johni viewed this as a unique way of engaging eighth graders in metacognitive thinking, which was one of her educational goals. To foster student ownership in the project, we planned for Johni to engage her eighth graders in creating and planning procedures for studying the second graders' thinking. What transpired over the course of the school year transformed a narrowly focused study on childrens' thinking into a more elaborate project. The second and eighth-grade students' enthusiasm and interest in each other led them to engage in a variety of language-related activities.

This is our story of how the project evolved and what we have learned about the importance of relationships in creating a meaningful context for literate activities. We begin with a rationale for literacy partnerships. Then, we introduce the students and provide some background information. This provides the backdrop for describing the literacy elements that comprised the partnerships. We conclude with the students' suggestions for future cross-age partnership experiences.

Rationale

In a recent issue of *Primary Voices* on "Talking and Learning in Classrooms," Douglas Barnes (1995) reminds us that "[c]hildren's ability to use language develops more readily when they talk or write about a topic that matters to them for an audience with whom they want to communicate" (p. 3). This is what occurred with the literacy partnerships. The students were very interested in reading and writing when it related to communicating with their partners. There was a reciprocal relationship between using language to communicate and the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships. In other words, the talking, listening, reading, and writing that occurred led students to know and care about one another, and this in turn led to more literate activity. Understanding why relationships, such as these, are central to developing individual language skills depends on understanding that learning about language is a social phenomenon (Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1992). The view that literacy learning and learning in general are social accomplishments rests on the Vygotskian

theory that cultural experiences provide the context for the development of individual thought (Vygotsky, 1978). Barbara Rogoff (1990), for example, writes that "[c]entral to Vygotsky's theory is the idea that children's participation in cultural activities with the guidance of more skilled peers allows children to internalize the tools for thinking and for taking more mature approaches to problem solving that children have practiced in a social context" (p. 14). The literacy partnerships provided opportunities to engage in cultural activities, such as, discussing literature along with writing letters, biographies, and stories with indirect and direct guidance from teachers, older students, and peers. We have presented this rationale to situate the story that follows within a theoretical framework that readers might find useful in interpreting the significance of what transpired between the literacy partners.

The Students

Johni chose her most heterogeneous class of eighth graders to participate in the project. The class of 26 students was balanced in regard to race and ethnicity with 12 European Americans, 11 African Americans, and 3 students from Asian countries. There were 15 boys and 11 girls. The students lived in a variety of neighborhoods including public housing projects, middle- and upper-class subdivisions. The make-up of the second-grade class was similar. They came from the same neighborhoods. Eleven students were African American and 9 were European American. There were 12 boys and 7 girls. In both the

second- and eighth-grade classes, there was a significant range in students' reading ability. Georgiana's students ranged from kindergarten to seventh grade and Johni's from sixth to twelfth grade. Six of the second graders were participating in the gifted education program, and approximately half the class was reading on or above grade level.

Establishing the Partnerships

Student matching occurred early in the year. Johni explained to her class that each eighth grader would be paired with a second grader, and asked students to focus on understanding his or her child's participation in videotaped storybook discussions. She told them that a goal of the project was to promote metacognitive thinking, and explained that metacognition refers to the knowledge we have about our own thinking processes (e.g., remembering, perceiving, and understanding) and that metacognitive knowledge can be helpful in developing skills and strategies related to reading, writing, problem-solving, and decision-making (Garner, 1994). We also explained that, as researchers, we were particularly interested in the thinking of the eighth graders about questions and comments of the second graders during storybook discussions.

The names of the second graders in the project were written on slips of paper and placed in a box. Each eighth grader selected one of them. What began as a study to promote metacognitive thinking in a middle school reading/language arts classroom expanded over the course of the year into reciprocally beneficial and meaningful relationships. We have

come to call the relationships that evolved "literacy partnerships." The literacy elements in these partnerships included: (1) exchanging autobiographies; (2) writing letters about the videotaped literature discussions; and (3) celebrating the books eighth graders wrote for the second graders.

Exchanging Autobiographies

The first literacy experience that went beyond our original plan was the writing and exchanging of autobiographies. The eighth graders initiated the idea, and the second graders reciprocated.

Eighth-Grade Autobiographies

Once the eighth graders had been paired with second graders and they had received project folders, Johni began discussions about how to proceed in setting up the project. Her students expressed a need for structure in order to get acquainted and decided to write autobiographies for the second graders as a means of introducing themselves. Johni worked with them to decide what might be included in these autobiographies. They generated such ideas as a letter of introduction, writing a poem using their names, sharing family history, writing about their hobbies, telling about their future ambitions, and anything else that seemed interesting and appropriate. Each student created his or her own headings. For example, Alice used the headings, "Family and Home," "Special Interests," "The Best Things," and "A Look Ahead." One student asked whether they should

write or print the autobiographies. The class decided that it would be easier for the second graders to read if they used a word-processor or typewriter for their final drafts. They also talked about how to make their autobiographies more visually interesting, and that led most of them to include photographs or illustrations. Time was spent discussing different ways of organizing their papers. They took their outlines home and began writing, drawing, and gathering photographs.

The next day, Johni was surprised that every student had something to show her when they came into the room with smiles on their faces, talking excitedly about their plans. She admits that she was baffled: "Were these my students who did not wake up until third period?" They were asking their classmates questions; they were helping each other; and they were giving and getting quality feedback on the work they had done so far. Johni had been struggling to interest them in peer editing for months, and now they were doing it of their own accord. She watched with interest as her students cooperated independently with one another in reading and writing first drafts. Kathy was the first student to show Johni what she had done, and then, one by one, Johni learned more about her students. "I bathed in their lives I had never known."

Tammy, who is not the kind of student that gets noticed much in school except for the many blank spaces next to her name in a grade book, used her father's computer and laser printer to create a polished copy (see Figure 1). Students who normally ignored Tammy hovered over her, wanting to know how she had produced such a beautifully presented

My Life

After I graduate from Middle school I'll go to high school. I'm planning to take technology and art classes. If you can only pick one, I would pick technology because I like working with computers. Computers are very interesting and there are so many different things you can do with them. For example, computer animation. You do the drawings on the computer and then the computer can help you make the pictures move. On the news they have the weather. The computer shows the map behind the weather man. The weather man is really in a blue room. You also can use video cameras and computers together. Its fun working with computers, hey I even typed this on my computer at home!

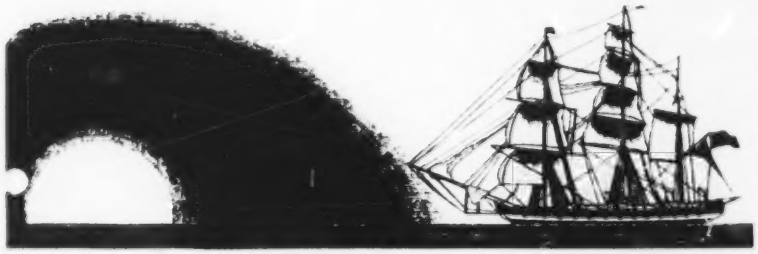

Figure 1. Excerpt and cover art from an autobiography

text. Johni was impressed by how this experience boosted her confidence.

Another memorable autobiography belonged to Ron, a student who Johni thought was impossible to reach. She was frustrated and losing faith about establishing a relationship with him, because he appeared to have no motivation, no spark, and seemed bored with life. When he finally turned in his autobiography, it was genuinely informative about his interests, feelings, and ambitions, as seen in the following excerpts:

> What I like to do best is play soccer, basketball, and football . . . . The best kind of books I like [to] read are about dogs and cats because I love animals. I would rather read the newspaper than to read the magazine because a newspaper has what's happening in the world right now . . . . I received a special award when I got honor roll when I was 11 yrs. old and it was in a frame. When I was 9 years old I did something that made me feel good I gave my mom a 4 leaf clover . . . . I plan on going beyond high school because I want to succeed in life.

Writing his autobiography was one of the few things that Ron completed all year. It was the first time Johni had something to talk to him about that did not involve his poor grades. He began appearing at her door at various times of the school day and even after school, as if he wanted to check in with her from time to time.

Second-Grade Autobiographies

While the second-grade students were reading biographies of famous U.S. citizens, one child suggested, "Hey, why don't we do one of these for our research partners?" Georgiana had told her students that the eighth graders had begun writing autobiographies to share with them. They enthusiastically voted to write their autobiographies too. They planned by discussing the kinds of things to include such as where they were born, who was in their family (pets included), their interests, and illustrations. The writing was done during writing workshop over the course of one week. They helped each other along the way and were assisted with proofreading by Georgiana and a classroom volunteer.

Hank's autobiography was more personal and revealing than Georgiana would have expected at this point in the project.

> I was born in Ithaca New York. I'm almost 8 years old. I love to go bowling. At age two I became a dog lover. I'm a big hit when it's time for basketball. When I was four I said, "Let's kill Big Bird and eat him for dinner." I'm very good at origami. My mom is going to have a baby. I have a little miniature pincher. That's a kind of dog. He's very cute. Do you want to here [hear] about my family? Well, I'm an only child. You want to now [know] how I became an only child. Whell, it's a sad story. My baby sister was very sick, so she died when she was a baby.

When the autobiographies were exchanged, the second graders poured over the information, photo-

graphs, and drawings. Some were more elaborate than others, but the second graders did not seem to notice or care. This was from their partner, and they wanted to know all about their eighth-grade student. Some of the second graders who had difficulty reading the text sought help from their peers or Georgiana. Several students asked to have autobiographies read aloud to the whole class. The second graders wanted the name of their partner taped on their desks.

Literature Discussions

A central organizing feature of the project was the three second-grade literature discussions that we videotaped. Each session began with Georgiana reading them a story. Then she asked them to pose questions about anything related to the story. She recorded these questions on chart paper, and they were the basis of a rich discussion. Prior to watching the video and/or reading transcripts, the eighth graders first engaged in a storybook discussion format like that used with the second graders. Johni read the book, and students generated a list of questions to discuss. Then they turned to the transcript of the second-grade discussion and watched the accompanying videotape. This became the basis for yet another discussion in which they compared and contrasted their thinking with that of the second graders. In conjunction with their discussion, they took analytical notes on the thinking of their second-grade partner. Then they wrote letters to their second-grade partners.

Me & Neesie

The first videotaped discussion was on *Me & Neesie* by Eloise Greenfield (Greenfield & Barnett, 1975). This is a picture book about Janell, a pre-school youngster, and her imaginary friend Neesie. When the eighth graders viewed their second-grade partners discussing *Me & Neesie*, they wrote individual responses to what they observed. Jerome's analysis of the videotape was particularly insightful.

> They talk over anyone until they get the floor. When they have different opinions, they argue trying to prove their point. If it does not work they will go to the book for a reference.

Then there was a whole-class discussion that included insights and observations on the amount of time individuals talked, behavior during discussion, and the quality and quantity of responses by the child they were studying. Many of their comments focused on what they viewed as problematic:

> "My kid doesn't say anything or talk loudly enough."
>
> "My kid talks all the time."
>
> "My kid sits and swings his legs."

Eighth graders also recognized some of their own behaviors during book discussions. They then decided to write letters to the second graders and included positive feedback along with suggestions.

Dear Donny,

From what I know about you, I can tell you are very creative. I can also tell that you are a pretty quick thinker. I look forward to meeting you. I thought you had some nice things to say. You seem to be a smart young boy. How did you like *Me & Neesie*? I thought it was a good book.
Hope to see you soon.

Raymond

The eighth-graders' letters led the second-grade students to watch the videotape of *Me & Neesie*, too, and some wanted to read the accompanying transcript as well. When the second graders wrote letters back to their partners, they included insights about their own participation in discussing *Me & Neesie*:

"I didn't talk much."

"I didn't get called on much."

"I was not paying enough attention."

One of the suggestions made by eighth graders was that a more sophisticated book be used for the second discussion. Both Georgiana and Johni had used *The Black Snowman* with students the previous year, and it had generated lots of interest and discussion.

The Black Snowman

The Black Snowman (Mendez & Byard, 1989) is a colorfully illustrated story that combines contemporary realism and historical fantasy. It is about Jacob's struggles with the conditions of poverty and prejudice. He finds courage and pride through his love for his younger brother and the wisdom of a Black Snowman adorned with a magic African kente. The second graders discussed this book toward the end of January. When the eighth-grade partners saw the videotape and read the transcript, they talked about the similarities and differences in their questions about this book. For example, both classes wondered who was telling the story and why Jacob had negative feelings about the color black. After comparing and contrasting their thinking about *The Black Snowman* with that of the second graders, they wrote letters to their partners. In these letters they offered compliments, posed questions, and offered suggestions.

Compliments. There were general compliments in many of the letters such as:

- "You are a very smart young lady."
- "I liked the questions and responses you gave."
- "I think you asked some good questions, and got some good answers."

There were also statements of approval about specific comments and questions made by second graders.

- "I liked the comment you made that, 'Some of the illustrations look sorta 3D, like right here.'"

- "Your question was important to the book. Do you remember your question? Well, if not here it is, 'How can the snowman talk?' It was an important question because if the snowman couldn't talk the story wouldn't have happened."

- "You only talked two times. When you did talk, you backed up your opinion."

One second grader responded by writing, "Thank you for saying I have a good imagination." We found ourselves speculating about the potential benefits to self-esteem for a second-grade child who receives compliments about their thinking and participation from an older student whom they admired.

Questions. The eighth graders asked questions of their young partners about *The Black Snowman* as well as more general questions.

- "Why do you think Jacob didn't like the color black?"

- "Do you think the magic of the kente brought it to life?"

- "Are you reading a book right now? If you are what is it?"

Some eighth graders posed probing questions about their partner's thinking.

Hank, in *The Black Snowman*, what did you mean when you asked, "Why did he hate the lamp?" and "Why did it bother him so?" The picture in the book looked as though he was turning out the light to go to bed. If you read in the paragraph on the opposite page, it showed that he woke up angry about something. What do you think the answer could be?

Your friend,

Jenny

Hank wrote back that, "When he woke up he was angry because he was poor and he thought the lamp looked all beat up and shadie (shabby) . . . ." This kind of literacy exchange occurred with other partners as well. The letters between partners became an important way for the students to explore each other's thinking.

Suggestions. The eighth graders also offered their young partners suggestions; like all good teachers, they first gave compliments. The suggestions were sometimes critical, but the second graders seemed to accept them as helpful tips for future literature discussions. This was possible because of the caring relationships they had developed.

- "Maybe next time you should ask more questions. Try raising your hand and sitting closer to your teacher!"

- "You talk throughout the whole discussion. Give others a chance to speak even if you have something good to say."

- "Next time, when you have to talk in a class conversation try to stay on the subject. And also don't be so quiet about your talking, speak out."

- "You should express your feelings. You will understand the book better."

Second graders indicated their intention to follow the advice they had received; for example, Raymond wrote, "Did you see me in video? I'm now trying to talk more."

The exchange of letters provided the literacy partners with a forum for comparing their parallel experiences in discussing the same books. Their letters indicate a variety of ways in which they were caring about each other. Thus, through compliments, questions, and suggestions, the eighth graders showed their interest in helping and understanding their second-grade partners.

Jumanji

In preparation for the third and final videotaped discussion, we asked the eighth graders if they would be interested in helping us choose a book for the next videotaped discussion session. They welcomed the idea, so we gathered a corpus of 12 picture books for their consideration. Johni organized the class into four groups, with each group considering three books. They discussed as a class which criteria would be important and helpful in evaluating the books. Their list included: (1) books that were entertaining, funny, and clever; (2) books which give rise to lots of questions;

(3) books with good illustrations; and (4) books that would be understandable to second graders. Johni was pleased to learn that her students recognized the need to establish some criteria and that they were able to do so based on their observations of what they were learning about their second-grade partners. The eighth graders were successfully assuming responsibility for an aspect of the project.

After each group had read, discussed, and chosen a favorite book, there was a whole-class discussion. A spokesperson from each group presented his/her favorite book candidate. More discussion ensued about the pros and cons of each book, and eventually a vote was taken. The class voted almost unanimously for *Jumanji* by Chris Van Allsberg (1981).

Celebrating Eighth-Grade Authors

The culminating literacy event for the partners was getting together to read the books eighth graders had written for the second graders. For the past ten years, Johni has involved her students in writing a children's book. Over the years, eighth graders authored many good books, and some were, in Johni's opinion, excellent. But, getting eighth graders interested in authoring a children's book had proven challenging in the past. This year was different because the students were highly motivated due to a personal interest in their second-grade partners. The eighth graders labored enthusiastically over their books.

They began by reviewing the aspects of children's books they should keep in mind. They discussed issues related to length, illustrations, and placement of

text. They wanted to make these books especially meaningful, so they decided to dedicate the books to their partners and/or make their partner a main character in the story. Jerome titled his story *Sherriella* after his partner, Sherrie.

> Once upon a time there was a girl name Sherriella. She was a beautiful girl with golden brown eyes. She lived with her wicked step sisters and her evil step-mother . . .

Some students chose to write stories with a moral. Lacy's book, *The Girl Who Found The Lost Wallet*, was about Nicole (her partner's name) who finds a wallet with lots of money in it. She struggles with the dilemma of whether to keep the money or try to find the owner.

Johni found that her eighth-grade students used everything they had been learning about reading and writing all year. She could see growth in their understanding of basic grammar skills and in their confidence as writers. In past years, students had resisted proofreading and rewriting; but these students were energetic in soliciting help from their peers and getting Johni to read everything. They had evolved as writers and seemed ready for the academic demands of high school. Johni had more fun working with her students on their books than anything else they had done all year.

On a bright sunny morning in May, Johni and her class of authors walked to Alps Elementary school with books in hand. Waiting for them were 19 eager second graders, Georgiana with refreshments and a

still camera, and Michelle with a camcorder ready to record the culminating experience of the project. When they arrived, there were brief introductory comments regarding the plan for sharing books, having refreshments, and convening for a wrap-up discussion on the project. Soon thereafter the literacy partners were reading to each other in the classroom, hallway, and cafeteria. Some were reading in pairs and groups. Sometimes the second graders were reading to the eighth graders and vice versa, and there were eighth graders reading the books authored by other eighth graders. Some books were read two, three, or more times to the same or different people. It was a festival of reading where student-authored books and cross-age friendships were celebrated.

Looking Toward Future Literacy Partnerships

The plan for future literacy partnerships will benefit from the suggestions made by students at the end of the project. These suggestions may be helpful to others interested in forming cross-age literacy partnerships. We offer the following with the caveat that what matters most is encouraging and allowing the students to help shape the direction of their partnerships. We view flexibility as a key concept which enables students to become emotionally invested in the literacy partnerships and to experience the development of self-esteem in both age groups.

All the students agreed that the project should get underway sooner. They thought getting together was an important component in their partnerships and

suggested that the teachers find ways for more communication and interaction between partners throughout the year. We have found many of their suggestions helpful in devising plans for: (1) launching the project early in the year; (2) conducting the literature discussions; and (3) exchanging student-authored books.

Introductory Videos

The students came up with the idea of introducing themselves via video at the beginning of the year. One student thought this would be an excellent vehicle for sharing information and becoming familiar with faces and voices; so this suggestion will be used by filming a video in each classroom, using the experience as a teaching opportunity on oral expression. Each student will rehearse and memorize a two or three sentence statement about themselves. Prior to seeing the video, the teacher will establish the partnerships. The video will also serve as a prelude to the writing and exchanging of autobiographies.

Literature Discussions

We found that having second graders and eighth graders read and discuss the same books was an important part of their experience as literacy partners. The eighth graders told us that they thought the transcripts were not as important as watching the videos. This was welcomed news because transcribing is labor-intensive and expensive.

The second graders thought it would be interesting to see a videotape of the eighth graders discussing the same story after they had their own discussion. This is an important suggestion, because it would add a degree of reciprocity to the partnerships that was missing this year. We foresee some interesting discussions ensuing with the eighth graders regarding what kind of example they would want to present in participating in a taped discussion for young, impressionable, and admiring students.

All the students thought it was important for the eighth graders to play a role in selecting the books to be used for videotaped discussion sessions. We also think the second graders would enjoy and benefit from engaging in a process whereby they discuss a set of books in order to select one for discussion. It might be interesting to give each grade the same set of books and see which one gets selected for whole-group discussion. If they differed in their decision, then both books could be used in future videotaped discussions. We plan on continuing our exploration of ways to involve students in selecting books for discussion.

Exchanging Student-Authored Books

The books the eighth graders wrote for and gave to their second-grade partners at the end of the project were a special gift. A second grader suggested that, next time, the second graders should write books for their partners as well. An eighth grader agreed, "I think they should write a book to us." The rest of the students were enthusiastic about this idea. We agree that exchanging student-authored books is another impor-

tant step in creating more reciprocal experiences for the literacy partners.

Concluding Thoughts

The development of these literacy partnerships illuminated for us the centrality of relationships with regard to engaging in literate activities. What we witnessed can be interpreted in light of Oldfather and Dahl's (1994, p. 144) reconceptualization of intrinsic motivation for literacy learning.

- The exchange of autobiographies supported students' *self-expression*; they could "declare who they are, what they know, and what they care about."

- The exchange of letters about the storybook discussions supported the students' "processes of discovering and generating meaning and sharing that meaning with others."

- The authoring of books for second-grade partners gave the eighth graders "a sense of competence as literate persons—as readers and writers who use tools of literacy for their learning goals."

- The contribution of ideas by students that further developed the literacy partnerships promoted their sense of *self-determination* by allowing them to "participate in shaping their learning agenda," and gave them "voice and choice about a variety of aspects of their learning."

We acknowledge that the idea that literacy learning occurs in a social context is not new to the professional literature, but we found that there is nothing quite as convincing as learning this from one's own experience. That is why this project was so valuable, it convinced us that relationships should be at the center of language education.

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The work reported herein was prepared with partial support from the National Reading Research Center of the University of Georgia and University of Maryland. It was supported under the Educational Research and Development Centers Program (PR/AWARD NO. 117A20007) as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the National Reading Research Center, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, or the U.S. Department of Education.

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